



COVID-19 RETURN-TO-WORKPLACES PLAN



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INTRODUCTION

This document constitutes the plan for phased-in return of University of South Carolina Beaufort (USCB) faculty, staff, and student employees (collectively, employees) to their respective workplaces on USCB campuses during July and August 2020 in preparation for campuses to be fully open and operational for the fall semester. This phased-in return plan is designed intentionally to return employees to each of the three USCB campuses in a gradual progression during the month of July. Each phase of the plan is developed based on current guidance of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC), the State of South Carolina, and other best practices. Because knowledge and understanding of novel coronavirus (COVID-19) evolve continually, institutional plans and guidance may be updated as appropriate in the coming weeks.

The purpose of this document is to provide broad institutional and operational-level guidance and to empower senior leadership to build unit-level plans that both guard the well-being of returning employees and ensure the efficient conduct of academics, research, and extra-curricular activities once students return to campus for the start of the 2020 academic year. **The success of our efforts to reopen three campuses depends on the commitment of each employee to exercise common sense and good judgment** and to comply with the guidance and directives contained in this document.

Our plan is **designed in alignment with core principles** that have guided our decisions throughout the COVID-19 crisis:

- To maintain the health, well-being, and security of USCB's faculty, staff and students
- To mitigate the risk of COVID-19 resurgence
- To maintain academic excellence
- To sustain university operations and prepare for the return of students.

Our plan is **mindful of the need to protect vulnerable and high-risk individuals** including:

- Those with underlying health conditions, e.g., heart disease, asthma, and/or diabetes
- Those who are immunocompromised, e.g., as a result of cancer treatment or bone-marrow transplantation
- Those who are 65 years of age or older
- Those who have **routine contact** with vulnerable or high-risk individuals, e.g., living in the same household or caregiving outside the household.

RETURN-TO-WORKPLACES PLAN (RWP)

Based on current institutional and public-health guidance, each of the plan's four phases should span approximately two weeks. During each phase, the university will monitor and be guided by the following conditions:

- Availability of personal protection equipment (PPE) as well as cleaning services and supplies to support faculty, staff and students in efforts to reduce the spread of COVID-19
- Capacity of local health care systems to support the number of cases and acuity of health issues
- Number of faculty and staff returning to on-campus workplaces and infrastructure supports the return of students for fall 2020
- Number and rate of increase of COVID-19 cases on campuses
- Availability/access to testing, contact tracing, and on-campus quarantine and isolation capacity inclusive of exposure protocols.

In the event of significantly-changing conditions or resurgence of COVID-19 cases during the summer, the university will provide additional guidance with regard the return of employees and students to campuses.

Prior to July 1, 2020, each Vice Chancellor will identify a **Deployment Contact** for each division/school to serve as part of the **Deployment Team** with representation from HR, Facilities, Business Office, Health/Risk Management, and Communications. Deployment contacts will be responsible for answering questions and serving as primary contacts for communication within their division/school and for determining the needs of that division/school as the phase-in plan is implemented.

PHASE ONE: INITIAL RETURN (JULY 6-17)

During Phase One, each university division/school will return no more than 30 percent of its workforce to campuses. Only employees deemed essential to prepare and test readiness of campus spaces for the return of employees by the fall semester. The university will use Phase One to finalize and test accommodations and procedures to prevent potential spread of COVID-19. Phase One should be used to develop protocols and, through practice, improve them as necessary in preparation for the beginning of the fall semester.

Returning to normal functions is neither the focus nor the goal of Phase One. Employees should return in a limited capacity to prepare shared spaces, adjust policies, and identify protocols and strategies for health monitoring, COVID-19 prevention, social distancing as well as training and education with appropriate and corresponding signage.

Vulnerable and high-risk employees should not return during Phase One but should continue to work remotely. Employees, who can work effectively from home and whose presence is not required to support the return of students and university operations, should continue to work from home also. Adjusting work schedules, limiting numbers of people in campus workplaces, alternating employee workdays, adjusting work-day hours, adjusting workplace entry and exit points, and other flexibilities should be considered in order to help ensure social distancing. Further, in cases where childcare is limited and/or K-12 schools are closed, divisions/schools should work with employees on flexible scheduling as duties permit.

Offices, workspaces, and classrooms should be adjusted, as possible, to meet six-foot social-distancing guidelines. Additional measures that should be considered to prevent spread of COVID-19, including but not limited to:

- Employee self-monitoring for symptoms of illness; those who are ill should remain at home
- Employee awareness – through intentional written and verbal communications, web postings, and signage – that cloth face coverings are expected in public areas, shared spaces, and other designated areas, particularly where six-foot social distancing is difficult or impossible to achieve consistently
- Non-essential visitor restrictions from campuses
- Video and/or phone conferencing in place of face-to-face meetings where possible and effective
- Reduce numbers and/or configurations of workstations to promote six-foot social-distancing guidelines and/or stagger work schedules
- Install plexiglass or other barriers to limit connectivity around workstations, check-in stations, reception areas, and other spaces as needed
- Reduce numbers of seats and/or configurations in classrooms, reception areas, waiting rooms, and other spaces to promote six-foot social-distancing guidelines
- Reassess and redirect, if needed, flow patterns through buildings to allow for reduced contact and to discourage congregation
- Increase in-door ventilation as feasible

- Install/provide foot openers or prop doors open, where feasible, to avoid high-touch of surfaces
- Install signage to encourage social distancing, hand washing, cloth face coverings, and other expected protocols
- Provide respiratory and hand-hygiene products
- Provide cleaning and sanitizing products, particularly for through-the-day use in public and shared spaces, and establish and monitor enhanced cleaning protocols with maintenance team
- Restrict and/or prohibit non-essential university travel; for necessary vehicle travel, minimize number of occupants per the vehicle.

Upon successfully meeting of these conditions over a trial period of two weeks, continuation to Phase Two should be considered.

PHASE TWO: IMPLEMENTATION (JULY 20-31)

During Phase Two, each university division/school will return no more than an additional 30 percent of its workforce to campuses (total employees returned should not exceed approximately 60 percent of total workforce). **The purpose of Phase Two is to increase operational capacity and support activities on campuses.** Although a full return to normal functions is not anticipated during Phase Two, divisions/schools should enhance preparations in order to be fully-functional in time for the return of students for the fall semester.

All policies, protocols, guidelines, and requirements established for and during Phase One continue to apply and must be implemented. If all conditions are met over a period of two weeks, continuation to Phase Three should be considered.

PHASE THREE: IMPLEMENTATION (AUGUST 3-14)

During Phase Three, each university division/school will return remaining employees (excluding those who have been authorized or directed to continue working from home) to campuses to conduct final preparations for the 2020 academic year and the return of students. All policies, protocols, guidelines, and requirements established for and during Phase One and advanced during Phase Two continue to apply and must be implemented.

If all conditions are met over a period of two weeks, continuation to Phase Four should be considered.

PHASE FOUR: ACADEMIC YEAR 2020-21

During Phase Four, divisions/schools across the university and all university employees return to full university operations, utilizing ongoing mitigation strategies to reduce the spread of COVID-19. All policies, protocols, guidelines, and requirements established for and during Phase One and advanced during Phase Two and Phase Three continue to apply and must be implemented.

The university will supervise closely all aspects of its campuses' operations to ensure maximum participation of employees, students, and others in the university community in socially-responsible behavior and practices, use of PPE, compliance with measures consistent with local, state and federal guidelines, and commitment to the highest-level of excellence in education delivery, research, and extra-curricular activities.

PURCHASING, CUSTODIAL & JANITORIAL, AND SUPPORT OPERATIONS

As written above, each division/school will have a Deployment Contact, who will serve on the Deployment Team and assess division/school needs. The Deployment Team will be responsible for obtaining supplies needed for each division/school's return to work. Further, ongoing information and/or updates as well as responses to questions and inquiries will be delivered to each division/school through its Deployment Contact.

With regard to ordering and procurement, the following guidance should be considered:

- Procurement of general pandemic supplies, e.g., face masks and hand sanitizer, is handled by the Procurement/Purchasing Department (to maximize cost savings from bulk orders) working in conjunction with Facilities, Environmental Health & Safety, and others for coordination and distribution; supplies are available, based on numbers of employees and other factors, to divisions/schools as needed – consistent with prior natural disaster procedures
- All faculty, staff, and students will receive a personal health kit containing two washable, reusable face coverings, pocket-sized hand sanitizer, and a germ key
- Each division/school will receive a group health kit containing large hand sanitizer, disposable masks, disposable gloves, disinfecting wipes, and disinfecting spray
- These kits will be distributed prior to the beginning of the fall term along with a process for requesting replenishment of division/school supplies as needed
- Supplies for classrooms, conference rooms, kitchens, recreation areas, and other shared spaces will be placed in containers and delivered by Procurement/Purchasing or Facilities to these locations, enabling faculty, staff, and students to clean spaces between discreet uses as an additive measure to enhanced day-to-day custodial regimens
- High-traffic areas, e.g., dining areas and restrooms, will be serviced continually through the day with workers sanitizing high touch surfaces
- Custodial operations have continued on campuses through the spring and summer, preparing all classrooms, residence halls, and other shared spaces for our return to campuses
- Chartwells continues to finalize protocols for efficient food service, including locations for outside dining, replacement of self-service buffets with server-manned stations, more pre-packaged meal options, controlled traffic patterns, and visible signage for social distancing.

Through the formation and work of several internal COVID-19 Task Forces, USCB has worked diligently to prepare for the phased-in return to campuses of employees and students. The decision-making process has been shaped by intensive information gathering, thoughtful consideration of expert guidelines and regulatory parameters, and developing and weighing multiple options.

While monitoring the evolution of COVID-19 in South Carolina, nationally, and internationally, the university will continue to work with Deployment Contacts for each division/school to address issues related to the pandemic and will adopt new guidance and/or policies as warranted to maintain a healthful environment.

RESOURCES

- Questions about USCB's COVID-19 Responses and Plans for Fall 2020: usbcovid19@uscb.edu
- USCB COVID-19 Web Page: <https://www.uscb.edu/coronavirus/>
- SC Department of Environmental Health and Environmental Control Covid-19 Web Page: <https://www.scdhec.gov/infectious-diseases/viruses/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention COVID-19 Web Page: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>